ROYAL BC MUSEUM
Where the past lives.

Collection Policy

Revised October 2004

1. Introduction

The Royal British Columbia Museum is a government corporation responsible under the *Museum Act* (2003) for collecting and preserving artifacts, specimens, archival material including the archives of the Government of the Province of British Columbia and associated data that are significant to the natural and human history of British Columbia.

These objects and archival records constitute the collection that is basic to the Royal British Columbia Museum's responsibilities in preservation, access, research and public interpretation. The management of this collection is guided by the need to preserve the collection, while encouraging access to it by the public, scholars and staff. This policy sets out the principles for managing the collection.

The Collection Policy is the fundamental policy of the Royal British Columbia Museum governing the collection. Objects and archival records to be accessioned must meet the legislated mandate of the Royal British Columbia Museum and have accompanying documentation that adds to the potential understanding of the human and natural history of British Columbia.

Collections and archival fonds, their acquisition, description, preservation, access and use, are generally acknowledged to be the central and distinguishing feature of museums and archives. This document sets forth the policy of the Royal British Columbia Museum respecting its collection.

2. Definitions

Archives of government - the previous records of the Executive Government of the Province of British Columbia.

Archivist - a professionally trained member of the Corporation with expertise in, and the responsibility for, determining the significance of the content of the archival records of the corporation.

Archival record - books, documents, maps, drawings, photographs, letters, vouchers, papers and any other thing on which information is recorded or stored by any means whether graphic, electronic, mechanical or otherwise of individuals or organizations other than the Royal British Columbia Museum

that are preserved by the Corporation as having ongoing value as evidence of the documentary history of the province.

Collection - archival records, artifacts and specimens that have been formally accepted into the stewardship of the Corporation with the strong presumption of perpetual care, management and access for present and future generations.

Curator- a professionally trained member of the Corporation with expertise in, and the responsibility for, determining the significance of the artifacts or specimens in the collection.

Object- a general term referring an archival record, artifact, specimen that forms a part of the collection. This term is used when a policy statement applies to all categories of the collection.

3. Legal Status and Authority

Statute

Under the *Museum Act* (SBC2003, c.12) the following statements enable the preservation and management of the collection.

- to secure, receive and preserve specimens, artifacts and archival and other materials that illustrate the natural or human history of British Columbia;
- to hold and manage the archives of the government;
- to manage, conserve and provide access to the collection;
- to dispose of objects in the collection after considering the cultural significance of the objects and public interest in retaining the objects in the collection, and in accordance with ethical and other standards adopted by the Royal British Columbia Museum from time to time;
- to not mortgage, place a charge or lien against or otherwise encumber the collection or any part of the collection.
- on the request of the government, the Royal British Columbia Museum must transfer all of its legal interest in and possession of an artifact in the collection to an aboriginal people if a treaty or other agreement with the government provides that the artifact is to be transferred to the aboriginal people, and the terms and conditions, if any, specified by the government for the transfer of the artifact have been met.
- only with the prior consent of the central government authority responsible for the disposition of records, may dispose of or destroy any record that is part of the archives of the government, and on request, must provide the government with access to a record in the archives of the government within a reasonable time. The authority for government is defined in the *Document Disposal Act*.

Ethics

The Royal British Columbia Museum is an active member of the professional museum and archives community. It supports the codes of ethics of the International Council of Museums, Association of Canadian Archivists, International Institute for Conservation and the Canadian Museums Association.

Standards

The Royal British Columbia Museum subscribes to professionalism in all aspects of collections management and seeks to maintain best practices through reference to published standards and consultation with professionals in the museum and archival communities.

Collections Committee

The Royal British Columbia Museum shall have a Collections Committee comprised of staff representing the breadth of the corporation. The Collection Committee shall be responsible for:

- ensuring that the Collection Policy is kept current through review and recommended changes to be enacted following approval by the Chief Executive Officer
- reviewing, and approving where appropriate, all proposed acquisitions to ensure that they meet the corporation's mandate and are manageable with available resources. The Committee recognizes that the Government determines which records are deposited into the archives of the government. The Committee shall review the resources provided to manage new archival records of the government.
- recommending appropriate acquisitions to the Executive Committee where final decisions may be required due to financial, space or staffing resource implications that exceed the current resources for collection acquisition and care.

4. Scope of Policy

Provincial

- The collection of the Royal British Columbia Museum shall relate to the human and natural history of British Columbia.

Subjects

- The collection shall be divided by specific categories according to accepted disciplines of study appropriate to good, recognised professional practice.

- Objects shall be assigned to one of the following collection classes by the Curator or Archivist responsible for the discipline. Unless otherwise designated, artifacts and specimens will be considered Class 2. The numerical ordering of the classifications does not indicate classification significance:

Class 1:
Records and documentation: all those original documents on paper, film, magnetic tape, or in computer storage that contain information relating to other items in the collection, or to data of concern to the corporation in their original form. In exceptional circumstances original documents may have to be replaced by precise copies, which are then treated as if they were originals.

Class 2:
Significant objects: all the museum specimens or artifacts of innate cultural and/or scientific value, this includes TYPE and other similarly designated specimens.

Class 3:
Exhibit and program objects: this includes all museum objects primarily obtained to enhance exhibits or for other public programming purposes. Limits on their use will be established by the Curator in conjunction with the Manager responsible and the Head of Conservation Services. These objects are not necessarily expendable but may be modified or otherwise utilised when so agreed.

Class 4:
Voucher collections: objects, usually natural history specimens, held by the Museum to document the identification of species mentioned in published literature or reports. These specimens may become Class 2 objects after the voucher period expires.

Class 5:
Expendable objects: this includes those specimens of the same general character as those in Class 2 or 3 but which are of limited value to the collection because of their poor documentation, their ease of replacement, or their limited use as a source of information. Thus, they can be used for those purposes that entail a risk of loss, damage, or destruction.

Class 6:
Education/Lending Objects: these include those objects designated as part of collections intended for specific public programming or other uses. The education collection consists of objects collected for hands-on public programming activities. Other such special lending or use collections may be established under this class to meet specific program requirements, e.g., Natural History lending collection.

Class 7:
Comparative reference collections: specimens and artifacts that are kept for comparison and identification.

Class 8:
Collections acquired for analysis or testing: these collections may be depleted or destroyed and replaced by documentary records.

Class 9:
Duplicates, models and replicas: these include copies of original documents, molds, casts, educational models and experimental copies. If considered significant objects by the Curator they shall be catalogued into the collection.

Class 10:
Library materials are an adjunct collection and are the subject of a separate Library Policy statement. This collection includes the Northwest Collection and library research material.

Class 11:
Archives of the Government of British Columbia: archival records of the Executive Government.

Class 12:
Public Archives: archival records of private individuals, companies, organizations and public sector agencies.

Cooperation with other Museums and Archives

The Royal British Columbia Museum has a broad mandate, both geographically and by subject. This mandate overlaps with the interests and authorities of other public institutions. Subject to the principle that the integrity of the collection may require that series of objects or records remain intact, the Royal British Columbia Museum will endeavour to collect in consultation and cooperation with other public agencies to ensure that objects and records are placed in the most appropriate repository.

5. Process of Collection

Methods of Acquisition

- Appropriate material may be added to the Royal British Columbia Museum's collection through gift, purchase, exchange or collecting. In the case of government records acquisition is in accordance with record schedules approved under the Document Disposal Act.

- Records, artifacts or specimens accessioned must conform to the corporation's mandate and be made with due consideration for the long-term implications of acquiring the objects.

- The acquisition of objects shall conform to all existing binding international conventions, federal, provincial and municipal laws, regulations and sectional policy.

- Human remains and sacred objects may be collected subject to applicable existing legislation, policies and guidelines.

- Staff involved in acquiring collections shall be aware of applicable legislation.

- Persons collecting for the Royal British Columbia Museum must clearly indicate their relationship to the Museum to potential vendors or donors.

- Personal collecting by employees and their immediate families shall not compete with the collecting activities of the Royal British Columbia Museum. Employees must first offer objects to the Collection Committee as potential acquisitions if their duties include developing the museum collection. Employees shall not use their Royal British Columbia Museum connection to promote personal collecting.

- New acquisitions will be summarized annually for the previous fiscal year as a section of the annual Research and Collections Acquisition Plan.

Conditions Associated with Accessions

- No addition shall be accepted for the Royal British Columbia Museum's collection subject to conditions imposed constraining the corporation's right to exercise full stewardship, care, use, management or disposition of the object or specimen as stated in the *Museum Act*, unless approved in writing by the Chief Executive Officer.

Documentation of Collections

- Proof of title shall be required from a donor or seller before an object is acquired by the corporation.

- It is a primary responsibility of the Royal British Columbia Museum to ensure that all data relating to objects are adequately recorded and preserved. The responsibility for collecting appropriate data on objects or setting standards for same rests with the curators or archivists. Registration and accessioning are the responsibility of the collections managers; archival records are accessioned by the private records archivist. Collection care and preservation documentation are the responsibility of the Conservation Section.

- The Chief Executive Officer shall maintain a catalogue of all biological TYPE specimens.

- All items in the collection as defined in "Definitions", which are accepted into the permanent or long-term stewardship of the Royal British Columbia Museum, shall be accessioned in a manner appropriate to the class and according to the requirements of the appropriate discipline.
  - Any item accepted into the collection subject to agreed conditions shall be so indicated in the accession record and so identified on or with the object or archival record.

- Every item acquired into the Royal British Columbia Museum's collection shall be documented to standards acceptable to the discipline. Each section will maintain a manual of procedures and standards relating to their discipline.
  - Catalogue data to be recorded shall include all available basic information known to be reliable regarding descriptive, contextual or other attributes sufficient to serve the requirements of the discipline.
  - Information supplementary to that recorded for objects or archival records at the time of registration shall be preserved as appropriate to increase knowledge or assist in collections management. Such information may include records regarding the condition, care, use, analysis and treatment of objects and related material or additional data relating to their context and significance.

- Field notes and other related documentation pertaining to the collection shall be identified and classified according to procedures of the records management section within one year of their initial recording.

- Accession, preservation and location control, along with descriptive data pertaining to archival records (government and non-government records) is

jointly maintained by the Access and Information Management Branch and Curatorial Services sections.

- Donors of material accepted for accessioning shall receive official and timely acknowledgement.

- All documentation relating to the collection shall be available for public access as applicable under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

- Copies of vital documentation shall be kept in a secure location off the corporation's premises.

- Gifts accepted into the Royal British Columbia Museum's collection shall require a statement signed by the owner transferring ownership and, if appropriate, shall contain definitive information as to who holds the copyright to the object. Acquisitions of copyrighted material shall include the transfer of exhibition rights to the corporation. The Corporation shall also request a waiver of moral rights in order to acquire the ability to manage the collection with fewest restrictions.

- Purchases of objects or archival records must be accompanied by a bill of sale documenting transfer of ownership and, if appropriate, document the holder or transfer of the copyright. Acquisitions of copyrighted material shall include the transfer of exhibition rights to the Museum.

- Tax receipts for donations may be issued in the year of the receipt upon the donor's request according to Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) regulations. Official receipts may be issued in any year subsequent to a donation. The value will be the Fair Market Value for the year of the donation and all such receipts will be clearly marked with the year of donation and that the value is of the year of donation. It is the donor's responsibility to determine if the receipt is acceptable to Revenue Canada. If the potential donor wishes to know how CCRA will treat the donation for tax purposes, staff shall refer them to seek their own accounting and tax advice from an accountant and/or by obtaining a formal advanced ruling from CCRA.

- In order to avoid a perceived conflict between a Royal British Columbia Museum employee's job responsibilities and the employee's private affairs an employee, whose duties include acquiring objects for the collection, shall not be issued with a tax receipt for any object acquired by the employee during the term of employment at the corporation.

- Royal British Columbia Museum staff may provide monetary evaluations for insurance of Royal British Columbia Museum collection objects and archival records.

- Royal British Columbia Museum staff may provide evaluations for corporation issued tax receipts up to $1000. only if no other appropriate expert is available or the cost of hiring such an expert is unreasonable, see CCRA, *Gifts and Income Tax*, Rev. 95, P113(e).

- An independent appraisal must be sought if the appraised value of any object or archival record is suspected to exceed $1000. The Royal British Columbia Museum shall select the appraiser and may require that the donor pay costs of appraisal.

- If the appraised value exceeds $10,000. then a second appraisal must be sought, which must be in substantial agreement with the first appraisal (the lower appraisal must be within 20% of the higher appraisal), upon which a tax receipt for the average of the two values shall be issued. If two appraisals do not result in substantial agreement then a third appraisal must be sought. If the third appraisal is within 20% of a previous value then the two closest appraisals may then be averaged.

- Transactions with the public or outside agencies involving receipt of artifacts, specimens, or archival records into the custody of the corporation, whether for temporary or permanent purposes, shall be documented in writing and signed by the member of the public or agency acknowledging the conditions placed on the transaction.

Deaccessioning

- Deaccessioning of all objects and supporting documentation from all classes of collections requires recommendations from the appropriate Curator or Private Records Archivist Manager, and the approval of the Chief Executive Officer.

- The Curator, Private Records Archivist or Manager, shall document the cultural or scientific significance of the objects and the public interest in retaining the objects in the collection.

- Unless otherwise noted, objects or archival records that are deaccessioned as being no longer appropriate to the collection shall first be offered to other museums, archives or appropriate public institutions as a gift, for sale, or exchange. If not successful, objects may be disposed of through public auction.

- Proceeds from deaccessions must be used for the acquisition or direct care of the collections, or be invested in a capital fund (such as an endowment), which generates income for the museum. Future endowment income is not subject to the same restrictions as the capital fund itself.

- Objects or archival records shall not be disposed of through gifting to the original donor but the corporation may allow the original donor to purchase the material at the current fair market value.

- The Royal British Columbia Museum shall allow living artists the first right of refusal to re-acquire their earlier works.

- If objects or archival records are in such poor condition that they serve no further use they may be destroyed or disposed of, after the deaccession is approved, with the process documented by at least two staff of the corporation.

- The museum shall deaccession and transfer objects or archival records, which may have been acquired under circumstances that render the museum's claim invalid, to the rightful owners of the objects at the request of an individual or organization with a demonstrable claim of historic relationship to the objects or records in question.

- The museum shall deaccession and transfer human remains and directly associated burial objects, upon the request of an aboriginal community with a demonstrable claim of historic relationship to the objects in question.

- The museum will negotiate with aboriginal communities on the deaccession and transfer of material culture of spiritual significance or essential to cultural survival at the request of an aboriginal community. Factors affecting transfers include the museum's purposes under the *Museum Act* and the context of ongoing treaty negotiations.

- Government archival records may be returned to Ministries, Agencies, Boards, Commissions and Commissions of Inquiry for active use when records were transferred to the corporation in error that were not yet inactive or when events or issues lead the ministry or other body to reconsider archival location of the records. Records will not be reactivated for the purpose of reference access or to obtain copies. The transfer back to a ministry, agency, court, board or commission shall be done with the approval of the Corporate Records Management Branch and the protocol now exists for Court Records.

- Public sector and non-profit agency archival records may be returned to the originating agency's archives when there is no provincial significance to the archival records; and upon the request of originating agency. Private

records being transferred to another archives are documented on the corporations Archives and Records Information System (ARIS).

- Royal British Columbia Museum staff shall not come into receipt of any items being deaccessioned.

6. Access and use of the Collection

- Objects and archival records will be stored in a secure manner that prevents unauthorised access. Authority to permit access rests with the Chief Executive Officer; Directors; the Head, Conservation Services or the applicable Manager, Curator, or Archivist and may be delegated to other section staff.

- Objects and archival records are to be used as appropriate to their class and condition so as to further the aims of the corporation and of the disciplines to which they are relevant. For government records the purposes are to provide evidence of the actions of government and protect the rights of the citizens and the government of British Columbia.

- Access to collections and to information will only be refused if the curator or archivist has, in writing, established such limits or the request contravenes *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* guidelines. Requests made under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* shall be dealt with according to that act regardless of any other limitations that may have been imposed. Any limitations imposed by internal restrictions may be overruled at the discretion of the Director responsible.

- Collections may be handled as appropriate to the intended use of collection types. Due to significance or fragility of objects, access and use may be restricted to use only by appropriately trained people, according to procedures established jointly by the appropriate Curator or Archivist, Manager and Head, Conservation Services.

- Objects will be handled and stored in a manner that is consistent with cultural sensitivities.

Use of Collections by Staff Researchers:

- Curators and archivists may use collections in their disciplines for research, educational, and exhibit purposes in conformity with corporation policies.

Use by Other Sections Within the Corporation:

- Collections shall remain under the stewardship of the appropriate sections. Objects and archival records subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* may, with the curator's or archivist's recommendation and Manager's agreement, be used by other sections for research, exhibit and educational purposes, according to the following guidelines:

- Sections may lend objects to other sections of the Corporation for purposes of the Corporation and shall set appropriate conditions on the loan to ensure proper care, handling and management of the objects when in the custody of the other section.

- Objects and archival records from any collection class, except TYPE specimens, and objects deemed too fragile by Conservation, may be used in exhibits within the corporation where environmental and security provisions are adequate to ensure their integrity and safety. This decision to use an object will based on the object's classification and will be determined by the Head, Conservation Services, in consultation with the appropriate Curator.

- Human remains from a First Nation's archaeological context or other items designated by the Royal British Columbia Museum in agreement with First Nations shall not be displayed in exhibits sponsored by the corporation.

Use by People or Organisations other than the Royal British Columbia Museum Corporation:

- Individuals or representatives of other organisations may have access to collections in the Museum as delineated under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Fees may be applied as defined under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* or under Corporation's fee schedule.

- A protocol agreement shall be in place with the Corporate Records Management Branch to facilitate access and use as may be required.

Destructive Testing of Specimens:

- A request for the loan of specimens, which will be partially or completely destroyed during the course of analysis, may be granted upon application to the Curator. All such requests are subject to the following clauses.

- Any requests must be made in writing and should include a brief research proposal. Student proposals must be signed by the supervisor who must be accountable for the material borrowed.

- The researcher must supply documentation showing competency in the proposed methods and positive results for the technique proposed. The researcher must indicate why Royal British Columbia Museum's specimens are needed.

- Samples will be taken either by Royal British Columbia Museum staff or by the researcher under the supervision of Royal British Columbia Museum staff. Portions of the samples that are not used will be returned to the Royal British Columbia Museum at the conclusion of the project.

- The transfer of materials from the borrower to a third party is not permitted unless expressly authorized in the loan agreement

- Upon the completion of the project, any DNA sequences produced should be submitted to GenBank or an equivalent database acceptable to the Royal British Columbia Museum.

- The results from other applications such as systematic or taxonomic identification or radio carbon dating will be provided to the Royal British Columbia Museum and will be used in the upgrade of collections data.

- Publications resulting from a study of borrowed material will acknowledge the Royal British Columbia Museum and list the catalogue numbers of specimens used. Two (2) copies of the publication will be deposited with the Royal British Columbia Museum. Publication should be complete within 5 years of testing and the Royal British Columbia Museum will make data available to the public after the 5 year period.

- The borrower will sign a loan agreement specifying all conditions of the loan.

- The borrower will pay all costs incurred in the processing of the loan request including third-party evaluation of the request and transportation of the specimens. The Royal British Columbia Museum will provide an estimate of costs upon request.

Loans from the Museum:

- Loans of corporation objects and archival records may be made to other institutions for scholarly, educational, or exhibit purposes providing it can be

assured the objects loaned will receive an acceptable level of care and security.

- All loans shall require a written agreement signed by authorised representatives of the corporation and the borrowing institution. It shall be recommended by the Curator or Archivist responsible and Head, Conservation Services. Any of the above may elect to not approve the loan but must state the reasons for disapproval in writing. In the case of disagreement the loan request may be referred to the Collection Committee for resolution. Recommended loans require the approval of the Manager responsible.
  - The appropriate section shall maintain full documentation of each loan. Conservation Services shall maintain condition reports for each loan.
  - The duration of each loan shall be specified and, when appropriate, a renewal period may be negotiated prior to the return date.
  - The corporation shall, if warranted, require that the objects or archival records being loaned be covered by insurance at the borrower's expense.
  - Groups of paratypes or complete series of taxa or groups of similar objects from the collection shall be loaned in at least two parts, with not more than 2/3 of a series loaned at one time. Holotypes may be loaned in circumstances appropriate to the discipline as determined by the Manager, Natural History.
  - Loans of Class 6 Education/Lending Objects may be approved and documented by the Collection Manager responsible. These loans may be made to individuals as well as institutions providing that an acceptable level of care and security can be provided.

7. Collections Care and Preservation

- Collection Management Procedures shall be determined by the Collection Committee, set down in writing, and made available to museum staff.
- The care and preservation of the collection is the responsibility of the Head, Conservation Services.
- Practices of care and preservation shall be consistent with the best available information on the subject within the discipline. Collections care standards shall be established jointly by the Head, Conservation Services, the appropriate Manager, and the appropriate Curator.

- Regular maintenance of the collection shall be conducted to ensure adequate care of objects and archival records.
- Maintenance, packaging and treatment of objects and archival records shall follow consultation and agreement with the appropriate Collection Manager, and Curator.
- Records of condition and conservation treatment shall be maintained and updated by Conservation Services.

- Natural history TYPE specimens shall be stored in an approved manner with their special status obviously indicated.

- Sacred objects and human remains shall be stored, cared for, and preserved in accordance with accepted procedures, and respecting the sensitivities of those individuals or organisations recognised by the corporation as having a legitimate interest.

- Objects and archival records will be stored in a safe manner that limits potential damage from threats such as fire, earthquake, insect infestations and other agents of damage and destruction. Personal safety will be of the highest priority and objects and archival records must be stored and used in a manner that protects the staff and the public from injury.

- All objects and archival records shall be inventoried on a regular basis. A quarterly random check shall be conducted for each section.

- A procedure and schedule for inventory shall be established by each Manager.

- Objects and archival records shall be evaluated for insurance purposes on a regular and stated basis.

8. Objects Belonging to Others:

- All incoming catalogued or uncatalogued objects, which may be considered artifacts or specimens and including those in temporary and travelling exhibits, shall be recorded by the appropriate Collection Manager and inspected by Conservation Services.

- Incoming exhibits without objects that are considered artifacts or specimens do not fall under the mandate of this policy (e.g., display panels).

- Incoming objects for exhibits that do not have a designated museum curator need not be documented by a Collection Manager.

- Collections belonging to other persons or institutions may be stored temporarily by the Royal British Columbia Museum when it is in the interest

of the corporation or discipline to do so and when the corporation is able to store them adequately. A formal agreement between the Royal British Columbia Museum and the other party must be in force during this period and agreed to by the Curator responsible, the Conservator and the Manager. A fee for this service may be charged by the corporation.

- Where, in the Curator's judgement, the quantity, value, and/or significance of material to be left in the Royal British Columbia Museum's temporary custody, or the duration of such custody warrants it, the Chief Executive Officer's approval shall be required.

Approved _____ Date: _____

Pauline Rafferty
Chief Executive Officer